

## ANIMALS - BIRDS



### BANDED IN (SOUTH OF) BOSTON

Then there are those who have a certain rapport with feathered creatures. As she has for the last seven years, Terri Nickerson of Duxbury is joining a hearty group of bird-banders on a trek tomorrow to local marshes to band young ospreys, perched high atop nesting poles. Nickerson, a tax accountant and Massachusetts Audubon Society volunteer, plans to visit nests at the Glades in Scituate, at Ivy Island in Marshfield, at the Marshfield-Duxbury line off of Route 139 and at Scat Island in Duxbury tomorrow, and to hit nests in Weymouth and Hull later.

The tricky part is to band the birds just as they become old enough to get ready to leave the nest, but not too old to fly away, Nickerson said.

"We have had reports of the young on a couple of poles up and exercising their wings," she said. "We may have some jumpers. Sometimes they crash land on the marsh."

Osprey are large fish hawks, once nearly eradicated by widespread use of the pesticide DDT but now making a comeback in the state. Local volunteers begin watching nests at the end of March when birds fly in after wintering in the South. Osprey begin laying eggs the end of April, which hatch around the first week in June.

But these hatchlings are no small fry. With a five- to six-foot wingspan, along with sharp beaks and talons, banding can be a challenge, to say the least. Poison ivy, abundant on the aptly named Ivy Island, is another hazard of the job.

But that is no deterrent to Nickerson, who has helped band nearly 40 birds over the years. When she was supposed to be watching her daughter play softball in Marion last week, Nickerson had her eye on the sky.

"One flew over with a fish in its beak last night," she said. "I was just thrilled."

ness-racing trotters, as well as former high-stepping show horses, Garte said. She owns a Morgan geld-

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KAREN HAYES

## AROUND THE TOWNS

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